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State Honors Women Torchbearers

The Indiana Roof Ballroom in Indianapolis was aglow Tuesday evening when the state-sponsored Indiana Commission for Women held its fourth annual Salute to Women. In an Oscar®-style gala the Commission presented this year's Torchbearer Awards to women who have overcome obstacles and made Indiana a better place in which to live, work and raise a family. The Torchbearer Award is the highest award presented only to women by the State of Indiana.

The statewide Council of Judges chose to present several special awards this year. They are: Trailblazer Award, Judge Sarah Evans Barker, Indianapolis; Spirit of Hope Award, Bren Simon, Carmel; Keeper of the Light Award; Judge V. Sue Shields; Community Spirit Award, Gazella Summitt, Vincennes; Heart of Indiana Award, Fay H. Williams, Indianapolis; and the Commissioners' Lifetime Achievement Award to Carole Stein of Indianapolis.

Ms. Stein was recognized as tireless champion for Indiana's children. Her efforts have focused on early childhood education (early childhood, child care provider and teacher education) and the health and safety of infants and toddlers at risk of abuse and neglect.

In addition to the presentation of the awards guests were feted with dinner and a program that included vibrant entertainment sung by recording artist Sarah Bauer, including her song "Radiance" and "My Own Backyard". A brief appearance by Big Mamma and the Silverettes, a tap dancing troupe of women ages 51-66, brought appreciative applause from the crowd.

Melissa C. Martin, Indianapolis, president of Issues & Advocates public policy marketing and advertising, serves as Chair of the Indiana Commission for Women. Commissioner Patzetta Trice served as Chair of the event.

In keeping with Governor Daniels tightened financial belt on state government, Ms Trice said, "We are honored to have many sponsors who made this event possible, including Eli Lilly & Company, U.S. Steel and the Indiana Women's History Association. With their support and that of our many table sponsors we were able to honor these outstanding women without spending taxpayer dollars."

First Lady Cheri Daniels presided as Honorary Chairman of Indiana's Salute to Women, opening the program with comments for the finalists and guests. Lt. Governor Becky

Skillman, a former ICW Commissioner and a 2006 Torchbearer Award winner, greeted finalists and presented certificates to each.

Each of the Torchbearer Award winners listed below received a gold medallion inscribed with “Lady Victory” and the official seal of the State of Indiana.

CATEGORY AWARD	NAME	HOMETOWN
Agriculture	Beth Bechdol	Auburn
Architecture	Diana Brenner	Indianapolis
Business	Yvonne Shaheen	Carmel
Entrepreneurial Advocacy	Billie Dragoo	Indianapolis
Health	Marjorie Soyugenc	Evansville
International Community	Sister Marie Kevin Tighe	St. Mary of the Woods
Journalism & Communications	Linda Rendleman	Indianapolis
Labor Advocacy	Lettie Oliver	Indianapolis
Law	Melissa Proffitt Reese	Indianapolis
Law Enforcement	<i>Awarded as a team (2)</i>	
	Betty Blankenship (deceased)	Indianapolis
	Elizabeth Robinson	Indianapolis
Military	Kris Bertrand	Indianapolis
Non-Traditional Career	Christina Ernst	Vincennes
Religion	Rabbi Susan Laikin Shifron	Bloomington
Science & Technology	Janna Foxx	Crane
Social Services	Beth Stein	Lamar
Sports & Fitness	Andrea Myers	Terre Haute
Woman in Government	Susan Crosby	Roachdale
Youth Mentor	<i>(two winners)</i>	
	Ellen Moore	Elkhart
	Erin Slater	Indianapolis
	2008 Special Awards	
Community Spirit	Gazella Summitt	Vincennes
Heart of Indiana	Fay H. Williams	Indianapolis
Keeper of the Light	Judge V. Sue Shields	Indianapolis
Lifetime Achievement	Carol Stein	Indianapolis
Spirit of Hope	Bren Simon	Carmel
Trailblazer	Judge Sarah Evans Barker	Indianapolis